1:Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR? Khasi AR?

MARRIAGE.

571 It is proposed in this section to consider marriage from its social side, the religious aspect thereof being reserved for another paragraph. The most remarkable feature of the Khasi marriage is that it is usual for the husband to live with his wife in his mother-in-law's house, and not for him to take his bride home, as is the case in other communities. This arrangement amongst the Khasis is no doubt due to the prevalence of the matriarchate. As long as the wife lives in her mother's house, all her earnings go to her mother, who expends them on the maintenance of the family. Amongst the Khasis, after one or two children are born, and if a married couple get on well together, the husband frequently removes his wife and family to a home of his own, and from the time the wife leaves her mother's house she and her husband pool their earnings, which are expended for the support of the family. Amongst the Syntengs, however, and the people of Mawbai, the case is different, for with them the husband does not go and live in his mother-in-law's house, he only visits her there. In Jowai some people admitted to me that the husband came to his mother-in-law's house only after dark, and that he did not eat, smoke, or even partake of betel-nut there, the idea being that because none of his earnings go to support this house, therefore it is not etiquette for him to partake of food or other refreshment there. If a Synteng house is visited, it is unusual to find the husbands of any of the married daughters there, although the sons of the family may be seen in the house when they have returned from work. Generally in the day-time you will find in a Synteng dwelling an old crone, who is the grandmother or even the great-grandmother of the family, also grandchildren or great-grandchildren; but the husbands of the married daughters are not there. The Syntengs seem to have more closely preserved the customs of the matriarchate than the Khasis, and the Syntengs claim that their views on religious ceremonies are purer, i.e. that they more closely correspond to what they were in ancient times than those of the Khasis. Amongst the Syntengs, occasionally, a widow is allowed to keep her husband's bones after his death, on con-

21: Ehrenfels E-4,5 (1950) 1953 AR7 Khasi AR7

on a historical past, different from that of the Khasi proper, the former having been ruled by the powerful, but somewhat Hinduized dynasty of the Jaintia Rajas until the Jaintia Wars of the British; the latter by small independent chiefs. Yet Jaintia social organization appears on the whole to preserve the matrilineal social structure clearer and to be less influenced by plains-acculturation, than that of the Khasi, though a few features of Brahmanical religious observances and also some traces of racial admixture are found in the immediate vicinity of Jowai, the former summer residence of the Jaintia Rajas. Stronger no doubt, than this influence, was that exercised by the British and non-Assamese Indians in the provincial capital Shillong since 1866. Methods of agriculture and other aspects of material civilization differ but little in the Jaintia- and Khasi plateau-areas.

The same cannot be said of both: the Wâr-Khasi and Wâr-Jaintias. Linguistically their affiliations are with the Khasi or Jaintias respectively, on the plateau-areas. Economically, however, both Wâr-groups form a separate pan-leaf cultivating unit in the little accessible steep southern slopes of the Khasi- and Jaintia Hill massif. Both Wâr-groups live in the environment of luscious tropical flora and fauna, sharply differentiated from the cool, barren plateau with its perennial winds and the heroic, if solitary beauty of its highland heaths, which forms the background of both the Khasi- and Jaintia plateau-groups.

The age of the Wâr-Khasi and -Jaintias, as one independent economic, — and two -half-independent dialectical linguistic entities, is an intricate problem. The two Wâr-groups subsist on pan-leaf cultivation as a money crop, grown in the thick tree-gardens as creepers; not on food-cultivation, as do the plateau-groups, because there is insufficient space on the steep slopes, for vegetable gardens or -fields. The pan-leaf cultivators therefore depend on food, purchased from outside. The slopes seem to have been inhabited until not long ago. Yet pan-leaf chewing is such an integral part of Khasi life, that until quite recently, and occasionally even now, a distance between two places is not measured by the number of hours used for walking, but by the number of betelnut- and pan-leaf packages, consumed on the way. Also the common benediction among Khasi expresses the wish that so and so may eat pan in the Garden of God. Yet pan-cultivation and the settlements of the Wâr-people as pan-leaf cultivators in the southern slopes seem comparatively young. Pan-cultivation on the plateau is impracticable. It is therefore possible that pan was for a long time only a much valued import article from the plains, bartered against Khasi ore and iron tools, though it is now an export article from the Wâr-country, brought to the markets of the plains, by both Wâr-Khasi and Wâr-Jaintia women and men.

According to a tradition, across which I came among the Nonglamin clan of the Nongmuker village, the ancestors of the present Wâr people were on the plateau at a time when no pan-cultivation was going on in the slopes and none of the present big estates of pan-tree gardens was yet held by their present (Wâr-) owners. A not distant ancestor of a Nonglamin clan-member who about two or three generations ago told the story to U Siang (one of